

THE
SABBATH SCHOOL VISITANT.

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INTRODUCTION.

THE Christian world seems just awaking from the slumber of ages, and every thing announces the dawning of that glorious morning when the Sun of Righteousness shall rise upon our world, and dissipate the moral darkness which rests upon the nations. Benevolent societies are springing up in every part of Christendom, to prepare the way for this eventful period; benevolent individuals are beginning liberally to contribute to the Lord's service, of the treasure which he has bestowed upon them; and the pious and believing are lifting up their importunities to the great Redeemer, with increasing fervor, "*Thy kingdom come!*"

To this glorious cause, those, whose minds are accustomed to an elevation above "the fleeting trifles of an hour,"—whose aims extend to immortality,—feel it a privilege—an honor, to devote themselves. They view the conversion of a world,—the salvation of all the myriads of mankind that are yet to exist,—an object worthy of themselves—a sublime, a glorious employment.

Among the highly useful and benevolent institutions formed to accomplish this great work, the one, to the cause of which the **VISITANT** is devoted, stands, wherever it is duly estimated, eminently conspicuous. The **SABBATH SCHOOL**,—and we speak it with a confidence justified by experience, by observation, and the word of divine truth,—is one of the mightiest champions, among all the hosts that are arrayed against the Prince of darkness. It is, moreover, destined, under Divine Providence, to change the moral aspect of Christendom, and to exert a most powerful agency in raising our world from the ruins of the fall. Little idea had its illustrious projector, of the utility of the institution he was founding, when he established this nursery of piety, intelligence and virtue. He little anticipated the good effects which he would live to see produced by it; its great and happy influences, which we ourselves have experienced; and the immensity of good, which it will be the means of producing in our world, through future generations, down to the final consummation of all things.

It is but about forty years since the Sabbath School was first instituted. Now nearly **ELEVEN HUNDRED THOUSAND** human beings are in the rich enjoyment of its blessed privileges!—receiving instruction, from sabbath to sabbath, in those things which may prepare them for usefulness here—for glory, honor, and immortality hereafter. It has also given rise to an institution for extending the knowledge of divine truth—the greatest and grandest, which the world has ever beheld:—the **BRITISH AND FOREIGN BIBLE SOCIETY**. And altho' these facts may well excite our admiration, and fill us with gratitude, to Him who is thus pleased to bless and prosper such an humble institu-

tion, we can not but look forward, with ardent expectation, to the time, when its merits will be universally acknowledged, and its utility in promoting the Redeemer's kingdom, successfully realized; when a Sabbath School will enrich every village in Christendom, and be the great nursery of national morals and piety.

The institution is yet in its infancy. The efforts of the faithful, however, are promoting its growth, accompanied with the blessing of heaven; and the time, we trust, is not far distant, when, having arrived to full maturity, it will spread out its arms to every nation, and gather into its bosom the children of every clime.

The Sabbath School is a sphere of usefulness, in which few cannot, in some way, engage. Parents may send their children: it is their duty to send them. The young and the middle-aged may become teachers. The unlearned may go, and be taught. All may encourage it, by their smile of approbation. And in a cause like this, who would be an idle spectator?—Who will fold his arms, and look indifferently on, while the wonders of redeeming love are so gloriously manifesting themselves before us—so triumphantly advancing against the powers of the fell destroyer?

We feel ourselves justified in saying all this, while at the same time, we would not, in the least degree, depreciate the merits of any other benevolent institution. The preaching of the gospel must be supported, or the name of the Saviour is lost to our world. The bible and missionaries must be sent to the heathen, or they will forever sit in the region and shadow of death. But the Sabbath School begins at the foundation. It lays hold of the immortal plant in its infancy, and while young and tender, directs it upward to the skies. It suffers not evil inclinations to become settled habits, or settled habits to become inveterate. It commences the work of reformation even before an outward reform is necessary. It enriches the hearts of its subjects with the purest sentiments of our Saviour, and opens the way for the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit.

It is, however, true,—and we say it with regret,—that many prejudices still exist, in the minds of some of the wisest and best of mankind, against this system of philanthropy and beneficence; and in many societies, a thoughtless indifference, which is even worse than open hostility, enervates every enterprise of the faithful. This, however, is what might be expected. The Sabbath School is a young institution; and, like every other, in its first efforts, *will* meet with opposition, till, by its active energy, it displays before its opponents and the world, the achievements of its benevolence.

It will be one object of the *VISITANT*, to disseminate such information on this subject, as may tend to remove every prejudice, and to demonstrate the great utility of Sabbath Schools, in promoting our national and individual prosperity,—our immortal felicity,—and the glory of our Redeemer. It is also designed for the edification and encouragement of Teachers; by proposing what may appear the wisest and best method of managing and instructing classes and schools; by pointing out their motives to diligence and fidelity, and directing them to the end of their labors—the crown of rejoicing that awaits the faithful. The young will also have a share of our immediate attention. They will always find something in our pages,

ta lead them in the ways of piety—to impress upon their youthful minds, the momentous truths of holy writ.

And before we close, we cannot but express our heartfelt gratitude, for the liberal patronage we have received, wherever our proposals have been circulated. We hope the VISITANT will not disappoint the expectations of any one, and pledge ourselves, to the best of our ability, to make it useful. Its limited size will forbid the insertion of much interesting matter that we might wish to publish; but what is inserted, shall be selected from the best. Communications, if short, will be gratefully received, and inquiries on the subject of Sabbath Schools duly answered.

For the Sabbath School Visitant.

NO. I.

THE SABBATH SCHOOL TEACHER.

THE institution of the Sabbath School has been so generally established in Christian countries, and so thoroughly tested by experience, as to leave no doubt of its importance and utility. Ministers of the Gospel rejoice in the prospect, of its co-operation with them in the great work of evangelizing the world, and Christians of all denominations hail it, as a mighty instrument in the hands of God, to bring about the great day of glory, which has been promised to the church.

The person who fills the office of Teacher in this institution, is placed in circumstances, very similar to those of the gospel minister. Like him, he has a little flock committed to his care, and for the instruction and advice he gives it, he is accountable at the bar of God. Like him, the ardor of his soul must be engaged in the work; he must feel deeply interested in the welfare of the little immortals entrusted to him, and, from time to time, must bring forth things, both new and old, in illustration of the scriptures to which they are attending. And after he has performed all those duties, which he owes directly to his pupils, he must present their case before the throne of mercy, just as a faithful minister would, that of a people whom he loved.

But to be more particular.—A Sabbath School Teacher must endeavor to gain the confidence and affections of his class. Until he does this, he can expect to do but little good. If we have a friend whom we love, and whose judgment we respect, we are always ready to listen to his advice. Precisely so is it with the Sabbath School scholar. If he loves his Teacher, he will listen to him, and profit by his instructions. And it is no very difficult matter for a Teacher to gain the love of his pupils. Let the latter understand that his Teacher *loves him*,—let him see that he is seeking, with all diligence, not only his best interest for temporal existence, but his happiness for eternity, and that he is doing this, not for his own benefit, but at the sacrifice of many personal conveniences, and he must surely respect and honor him.

Again; a Teacher must *explain* and *enforce scripture truth*. Nothing is more erroneous, than for a Teacher to suppose, that he has done his whole duty, when he has finished hearing a recitation. Is this sufficient to satisfy the desire of a precious, immortal soul,

thirsting for knowledge?—Is it enough to answer the demands of conscience?—Will it be enough to pass the scrutinies of the final adjudication? Any person, even a child who can *read*, may do as much as this. But the Teacher who is devoted to his work,—who rightly estimates the value of the soul,—who feels that he, and the class committed to him, must stand together before the tribunal of Jehovah, will not be content, with barely hearing a recital of divine truth. His object will be, not so much, that his pupils shall repeat *long lessons*, as that they shall *UNDERSTAND what* they repeat. He should always encourage a spirit of inquiry among them, and explain the Bible truths, in a clear, simple, and forcible manner. One very important qualification of the Sabbath School Teacher, is to be able to adapt his language and his manner to the capacities of his little hearers. He may have the wisdom of the sagest, and the zeal of the most philanthropic, and his words still die away upon the ear, ineffectual and forgotten. If he would interest their feelings, and instruct their understandings, let him regard their minds, not as they will be at some future time, when matured by age and experience; but as they are at present—weak and infantile. Let him particularly observe their method of expressing ideas among themselves, and use, as nearly as may be, the same terms, in his instructions to them. In elucidating the scriptures, his illustrations should be such as are most familiar; his examples should be taken from those every day objects, that most interest the minds of children. Much good instruction, no doubt, is lost, merely from the want of appropriate terms, and an appropriate method of conveying it. Teachers are too apt to forget, that their pupils are just starting in that course of improvement and enlargement of mind, in which *they* have already made considerable advances, and that they are incapable of grasping at once at a truth, when expressed in the precise and modified language with which long experience and discipline have furnished *them*. Nothing should be taken for granted, unless it be this fact, that the scholar knows as yet *comparatively nothing*. His instructor should commence with him just where *he* began, when himself a scholar, and lead him on, step by step, explaining, illustrating and enforcing truth, in every part of his progress.

Again: The Sabbath School Teacher must be familiar with the Bible. If he would *instruct*, he must first *be instructed*; for “How can the blind lead the blind?” The improvement of the scholar must necessarily depend, in a great degree, upon the prior knowledge of the Teacher. If the views of the latter are clouded, the former can never be expected to get a clear idea of his explanations. Let no one offer the too trite excuse, that he has not *time* to study the scriptures. It is the duty of every man, to make himself acquainted with all the truths contained in the Bible. The command is, “Search the scriptures;”—And this is given to us, not as acting in any official capacity, but merely as private individuals. So that the excuse is not only ridding ourselves of a most obvious and necessary duty, as Teachers in the Sabbath School, but also of a duty directly enjoined upon every one, to whom the Revelation is sent; and indeed, it is impeaching the justice of God, in requiring of us services which he has not given us time to perform.

N. T.

Utica Union Sabbath School.

THE Quarterly Examination of this Institution was held on Sunday Evening last (6th inst.) at the Presbyterian Meeting-House. A great number of people were assembled on the occasion ; among whom were the Teachers of the Whitesboro' Sabbath School, and other citizens from Whitesboro'. The exercises were highly interesting. The pulpit was filled by the Rev. Elder Willey, of the Baptist Church, Rev. Mr. Aikin, of the 1st, and Rev. Mr. Brace, of the 2d Presbyterian, Rev. Mr. Frost, of Whitesboro', Rev. Mr. Vanderlip, of Albany, and Rev. Mr. Shimeall, of Hamilton Seminary.

The meeting was opened with prayer, by the Rev. Mr. Frost. The school then sung a beautiful hymn, suitable to the occasion, and in an animated style. The Superintendent of the Ladies' School then reported :—She expressed, in behalf of herself and the Teachers, continued cause for gratitude to her Heavenly Father, for his kindness to them, and the dear children of their care. She announced the external prosperity of the school, and its increase of numbers by the united exertions of some faithful Teachers : but lamented that the fruits of saving faith were so little produced in the hearts and lives of their dear pupils. The Teachers felt themselves unworthy to be employed in the Lord's vineyard ; but would depend humbly on his Spirit for a blessing. The number of Teachers during the quarter had been 22 ; average No. of scholars, 122 ; greatest No. on any one day, 153 : 36,468 verses in scripture recited ; and 11,904 scripture questions answered—Total, 48,372.

The Ladies' School was then examined on their studies in the New Testament, and an address, prepared for the occasion, and suited to the capacities of children, was delivered by one of the scholars. This was highly interesting, and had a happy effect upon the audience.

The Superintendent of the Gentlemen's School next reported :—He commended the Teachers for their apparent devotedness to the cause : but lamented with them, that the fruits of their long and arduous labors had as yet been so few and feeble. He spoke of the responsibility of the Teachers—it was a high responsibility ; and often, while with tender concern, the Teacher is looking upon the dear objects of his care, and calling down before him the solemnities of immortality, will the tear of anxiety insensibly gather in his eye, and the fervor of his soul be poured forth over them, to his Father in Heaven. The Superintendent also mentioned, in an affectionate and respectful manner, the loss of their venerable and worthy President. There are now engaged in the school, 26 Teachers ; average No. of scholars, 130 : No. of scripture verses recited, 35,193 ; No. of scripture questions, 23,140—Total, 58,333.

The school then united in singing a hymn ; the following address to the audience, was delivered by one of the scholars ; three little boys went around to receive the contribution ; another hymn was sung ; and Rev. Mr. Vanderlip then pronounced the blessing.

ADDRESS.

Again, PARENTS and BENEFACTORS, are you assembled to pay us your quarterly visit ; and here we give you a hearty welcome. How interesting these seasons always are !—How every thing con-

spires to make them so ! Behold here, our Union Sabbath School. See how these pews are crowded with little beings, in the childhood of life—in the beginning of immortal existence. Behold, also, our beloved Teachers,—whose care for us is like a mother's for her infant child—whose kind instructions drop like honey from their lips. Look upon them, dear Parents, love them, and thank them. Here, too, are you, Respected Patrons, and your presence honors us. We thank you for all your kindness, and for all your charities ; and affectionately ask, to be remembered in your prayers at the throne of heaven. There, also, are seated, the Reverend Ministers of the sanctuary—"the messengers of grace—the legates of the skies ;

" By whom the violated law speaks out
Its thunders, and by whom, in strains as sweet
As angels use, the gospel whispers peace."

How this goodly sight rejoices them ! for in our Teachers they behold fellow-laborers with themselves in the Lord's vineyard ; in us, a little church, who, from Sabbath to Sabbath, are taught in the ways of piety ; and in all this great congregation, the objects of their ministerial charge, and high responsibility. Who knows, too, but Angels, and Celestial Spirits, may be here ?—Ah, yes ! and could that invisible curtain be drawn aside, which hides them from us, we might behold a glorious company, tuning their harps to our Saviour's praises, and waiting to bear intelligence from us, to the regions of the blessed. And who can tell, but the spirit of ROBERT RAIKES is here !—the great, the good, the benevolent—the illustrious founder of this blessed institution—whose memory is embalmed with the tears of thousands —whose name we delight to honor ? But this is not all. The great Jehovah is here !—Here is Christ Jesus, our Saviour—Here is the Holy Spirit. What a divine—what an august congregation ! Well may we call the season interesting. Well may we exclaim, with the holy Patriarch of old, " How dreadful is this place ! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."

Methinks now, every countenance bespeaks solemnity. A sense of Jehovah's presence, seems to have suppressed every unhallored feeling. O, that a sense of the divine excellency might ever rest upon us —that our hearts might be filled with his loving-kindness !

You wish to know, dear Friends and Patrons, what we are doing—what improvement we have made. Indeed, we almost blush to tell. True, we are learning the scriptures ; we improve in knowledge and understanding ; we hope we are growing wiser and more respectable. But as it regards the weightier matters, for which our dear Teachers are laboring and praying—as it regards our preparation for those glorious mansions beyond the skies, where all the pious dead have gone—we have a poor account to give. Most of us, it is feared, are strangers to piety, and in the broad way that leads to death. Our high privileges are greatly abused—our sins unrepented of—our merciful Saviour rejected. Pious Benefactors, let us have your prayers. Ministers of Jesus, let us have your intercessions. Beloved Teachers, you do, indeed, remember us.—Kind and faithful are you ; but we tire your patience, and abuse your love. My dear School-mates, let us remember to pray for ourselves : the prayers of others can

never save us. Who of us, indeed, is it, that has never prayed?—Who, of all this little company, that does not, morning and evening, lift up his desires to heaven, for pardon and salvation? But we do not pray in earnest—we do not feel our wants—our prayers are only as idle tales, or unfeeling words.

But, Respected Friends, we *can* say, that our young hearts have here treasured up many good things. And often, while our dear Teachers are talking with us upon things divine and heavenly, a glowing fervor steals upon us, and we wish and pray that we were good. Yes: the gracious sentiments which have here been taught us, will dwell forever in our memories. While we are young, we cannot forget them: when old and gray-headed, we shall still think upon them: they will follow us to the grave, and to the judgment; and still remain fixed in our memories, while ages after ages shall roll on to eternity.

[We have been thus particular in this account, because it is a subject in which the public, in this vicinity, are highly interested. And, in conclusion, we would affectionately suggest to the Teachers, what we trust they have often dwelt upon in their retirement, before the throne of mercy, that the splendors of a Public Examination, when weighed in the balances against the immortal welfare of one of their dear pupils, is lighter than vanity.]

NEW-YORK FEMALE UNION.

Extract from the eighth annual report in April last:—The superintendent of No. 6 mentions the practice of one of the teachers as worthy of imitation. “She assembles her little flock on Saturday of every week, and in the retirement of her room, pours out her soul before the mercy seat of the Most High, and solicits his blessing on the objects of her care.” A letter was lately received by the teacher of a Bible Class from one of her pupils who had removed to the west: it is addressed to her “Dear and affectionate Teacher.” After giving some account of her journey &c. she concludes in the following simple language of gratitude. “I attend the Sabbath School here, but I shall never find a teacher I love as well you.—I thank you for all your kindness to me, and all the good instructions you have ever given me: I often think of the last words you said to me, and hope I may be the better for all the good you endeavored to teach me, and may heaven bless and reward you.” “The Superintendent and Teachers of No. 14, with gratitude acknowledge, that since the last anniversary eleven of their teachers, and one scholar, have been brought, they humbly trust, to a knowledge of the truth, as it is in Jesus, and have humbly professed their faith in Christ.” Another report mentions a Sunday Scholar who endeavored to instruct an ignorant mother, reading the bible to her, and anxiously endeavoring to explain it to her as she had heard it done in school. With tears she told a pious lady, that she prayed to God to take away her mother’s stony heart, and give her a good one.”

ANECDOTE OF A SABBATH SCHOOL SCHOLAR.—*Communicated.*

Two persons, in this village, were, a short time since, engaged in a controversy upon religious subjects. A Sabbath School Scholar

happened to be present ; and when he found the conversation to be on the Bible, he was all attention ; for he had been learning some of the truths of this Book, and was still thirsting for more and more of divine knowledge. One of the disputants was endeavoring to support the opinion, that the *belief* of a man was, in no case, a criterion, by which to judge of his moral character, or, in other words, that it matters not what a man believes, provided he is *sincere* in that belief ; and in proof of this doctrine, he quoted, as he supposed, a passage of scripture, but which is no where to be found in the bible. The little boy watched an opportunity, when it would be proper for him to speak, and then, addressing his superior in age, though not perhaps in divine knowledge, with perfect simplicity and unassuming modesty, mingled with reproof, he replies, "Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures."

Death Bed of a Jewish Rabbi.—WHEN Rabbi Johannan Benjazi was sick, his disciples came to visit him ; and when he saw them he began to weep. They said unto him, Rabbi, the light of Israel, the right hand pillar, the strong hammer, wherefore dost thou weep ? He answered them, if they were carrying me before a king of flesh and blood, who is here to-day, and to-morrow in the grave ; who, if he were angry with me, his anger could not last forever ; if he put me in bondage, that bondage would not be everlasting ; and if he condemned me to death, that death would not be eternal ; whom I could sooth with words and bribe with riches, yet even in these circumstances I could weep. But now I am going before the King of kings, the only blessed God, who liveth and endureth forever and ever ; who if he is angry with me, his anger will last forever ; if he puts me in bondage, his bondage will be everlasting ; if he condemns me to death, that death will be eternal ; whom I cannot sooth with words, or bribe with riches ; when further, there are before me two ways, the one to hell the other to paradise, and I know not to which they are carrying me—should I not weep ?

THE REFLECTING CHILD.—“What occasions that melancholy look ?” said I to one of my young favorites one morning. He turned away to hide a tear ready to start in his eyes. His brother answered for him : “Mother is very angry with him because he would not say his prayers last night, and cried all day because a little sparrow died that he was fond of.” At this the little mourner hastily turned round, and looking at me, exclaimed, “I could not say *Thy will be done*, because of my poor bird.” I took him by the hand, and pointing to his school-fellows, mark this observation said I, from the youngest present, only six years old ; for its explains the nature of prayer, of which, perhaps some of you are ignorant. Many persons repeat words, who never prayed in their lives. My dear boy, I am very glad to find you were afraid to say to God, what you could not say truly from your heart : but you may beg of him to give you submission to his will, and you may try to forget the loss of your sparrow, and find another to supply its place ; for that is what all wise persons do, instead of fretting and vexing themselves, they consider how to retrieve their losses by other means.

Youth's Magazine.